

Reality Is A State Of Mind

by Quinn

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Summary: What is reality... really? (Read author's note for story details)

1. Reality Is A State Of Mind: Ch 1

Author's Note:

>This began after I read Arishia-chan's 'Alicia of Riary, Ally of Anime'. The concept of being able to be in the DBZ world was too good to be true. From the amount of new stories around this concept it would be quite obvious really. Anyway, I started out with the same concept and the same goal (to get with that hunk Vegeta), but after a while it went off on a totally different storyline (even though the ending is still in sight). So I thought I'd just post it up as a different story. I do not know every single detail about the DBZ universe, so I may stuff up here and there, but flow with concept, people. DBZ was created by them anime copyright holding dudes, but the credit for inspiration and foundation goes to Arishia-chan, whose story was marvellously engrossing.

--Quinn

>
The last thing I remember was a thoughtâ€¦ a wish, rather. It wasn't a sentence, more like an emotion, a concept. It was a single longing that flashed through my mind, echoing off the sides of my skull before fading under the darkness of sleep. I swear I heard a voice before I drifted off, saw a glimpse of a shimmering green from under my half-closed eyelids. Now I know that dragon was listening, listening to my thoughts as they floated through the night air. What it was doing there I do not know, how it existed I do not know. It was impossible in my realityâ€¦ but what is reality, really? What the mind comprehends and interacts with, what the body feels and responds to, is that reality? If so, then your reality is whatever you believe you exist inâ€¦ whatever you wish to exist in, wherever that is.

>
I thought I dreamt that I was falling. Falling through the empty space, into the darkness. I was not alarmed, it happened often, when I was falling asleep. Then something zoomed past my left ear. My hair

blew in my face, making me blink. My heart stopped dead. I should not feel, much less hear this well in dreams. I blinked again, taking deep breaths, hoping to jerk up awake, safe in my own bed. Yet I still fell, the air rushing past my ears, pulling at my hair. My heart jolted back to life, pummelling my chest wall furiously. The blood pounding in my ears, I tried to open my mouth to scream. Nothing but a terrified whimper was emitted from my rapidly tightening throat, and the sound was quickly left miles behind me as I continued my plunge towards the looming darkness. The darkness called to me, as I felt it cloud over my mind. Succumbing to the heaviness of my eyelids and allowing myself to slip into the comforting darkness, I blacked out.

>
The sound of the wind rustling through foliage floated into my mind as I came to. I quickly opened my eyes then closed them quickly, hand to my head, groaning at the sudden influx of light into my dazed mind. I pushed myself up with one hand, the other hand still held to my temple. Cautiously, I peeked through one eye. Rocks, red rocks on red earth, red sand swirling in the distance. Where was I? Opening the other eye, I glanced around myself. I was lying in what looked like a red desert, but it didn't feel hot or dry. I stood up swiftly, regretting it just as quickly as my eyes clouded over, threatening to black me out again. I bent my head, hands to my forehead, waiting for the throbbing to cease. When the world stopped spinning, I slowly lifted my head. A glistening in the distance seemed to promise water, and even if it were just a mirage I had to move to clear my mind. I walked slowly towards the shimmering image, relieved when it didn't fade as I approached it. I soon arrived at a large lake, glittering in the sunlight.

>
I smiled to myself with relief, wincing as my parched lips split slightly. Sighing, I knelt down to drink. I reached out my hand, dipping it into the cool, clear water. As I lifted it out, I suddenly gasped, the water splashing onto the red earth. My heart began pounding again as I examined my hand. It was a beige colour, plain beige, no streaks of red or orange or mixes of other normal skin coloursâ€¦ it was not normal skin. I leaned over the bank to look at the rest of me, and then I wished I hadn't. The personâ€¦ the thing, which stared back at me wasn't human, at least not by my terms. My eyes were too large, my pupils looked like huge shiny marbles. My nose was merely a protruding polygon, and my lips were pursed and full. My chin was way too small for the rest of my face, giving my overall face a heart shape. A lock of hair fell past my eyes, landing softly to float on the water. That wasn't my hairâ€¦ it was too long. I stood up slowly, to look at the rest of my body. My hair fell past my shoulders and down to my waist in dark ebony strands. Recognition flooded me pulling in its wake a sense of dread and horror. I was a cartoonâ€¦ an anime character no less. Those graceful Japanese cartoons with huge eyes and exaggerated hair. I lifted my hands to cover my eyes; it was too much. I took deep breaths, my mind racing uncontrollably. I looked down at my clothes. I was wearing the shorts and white tank top I had worn to bed. My legs were planted beneath me, long and graceful lengths of plain beige. For Pete's sake, I didn't even have toenails.

>
My heart was numb and my feet felt like lead as I got up to leave. I didn't know where I was going, but I had to get out of there. Nearby, I saw some huge round dome shapes protruding from the ground. Something flickered in the back of my mindâ€¦ I had seen this before somewhere. I slowly made my way over to the dome cluster. They had round portholes in them, they looked like round houses. I stopped short as I saw a figure lying in front of one of the houses. My heart began pounding yet again as I stepped towards the collapsed form. The

figure was wearing a cape and some sort of headdress. I gingerly pulled at the figure's shoulder then jumped up as it was rolled onto its back. I was frozen in fear. 'No, no, no, no, noâ€¦' I kept saying to myself. Just to make sure, I pulled at the headpiece, or turban, as they called it. Sure enough, two green antennae sprung up from the creature's head. Hisâ€¦ no, its, eyes were wide and staring, its face smeared with a dark substance, presumably its blood. 'Namek?' I thought. But that meant that I was inâ€¦ no, it couldn't beâ€¦ No!

>
I recoiled from the body in sheer horror. This had to be a dream, but noâ€¦ it was too real. Then how? Why? The wind blew again, this time colder. Clouds covered the sun for an instant and I shivered, wrapping my arms around myself. I backed away from the body, turning my attention towards the dome house next to me. The door was smashed open, I could see into the small house. The wind blew again, and I hastily entered the shelter.

>
It was quiet in the house, what disaster came upon this planet I did not want to think about. I had to find a way to get homeâ€¦ or get somewhere safe, somewhere without dead aliens on the ground. The wind howled around the doorway, the broken door creaking. I looked around and grabbed a creamy white robe from the back of a chair. I pulled the smooth robe over my thin tank top and hastily tied the sash. The robe felt warm. Maybe the owner had a highâ€¦ what did they call it? Chi? That glowing thing that those Saiyan fighting dudes had. The edges of the robe had a deep red silk-like border with bright gold characters against the red.

>
I stopped examining the robe and sighed as I sat down on the chair. What was I going to do? If I was on Namek then that means that this must have been when the Namekians were under attackâ€¦ but by whom? I racked my brain, trying to access my limited knowledge of the Dragon Ball cartoon. As far as I've read, the Namekians were only attacked onceâ€¦ by some vegetable dude then ultimately by a gay-looking Freeza guy. 'Good guys,' I told myself, 'Think of good guys here.' I squeezed my eyes shut, willing my weary mind to work. Goku, was it? And his kid, Gohanâ€¦ and some bald dude with spots on his head. There was a green-haired chick in there somewhereâ€¦ with a really weird name. Heck, all their names were weird. Bulma, that's it. I opened my eyes again, staring blankly at the floor for a moment. I had to find them. I definitely didn't want to run into this Freeza dude. My stomach growled and I glanced around the room. Namekians only drink water, I remembered from somewhere. 'Great,' I thought, 'Just friggin' great!' I had to find some food quickly, before I passed out again, this time from overwhelming hunger.

>
I scoured the room, looking for something even mildly edible. My eye came to rest on a long stick sitting by my foot. It wasn't edible, but I noticed a long red ribbon tied from one end of itâ€¦ like the border of the robe I was wearing. 'Maybe they go together,' I thought. I picked it up and examined it. My stomach growled again, and I sighed. Oh well, at least I had a walking staff. Maybe I could find some food outside.

>
I wandered between the domes looking for a garden, a vegetable patch, anything. I came upon a patch of oddly coloured foliage, apparently carefully cultivated. Next to the patch lay another body. It was a young Namekian, about my size. I gulped back the sick feeling in my stomach as I wandered towards the patch. I winced as I stepped onto a sharp rock that bordered the patch. I stopped, nursing my foot. My feet weren't made for trekking. How could the jungle people walk barefoot through thorny foliage? I glanced at the Namekian. He was wearing sandals, leather soles with straps that tied

around the ankle and calf. 'He won't be needing them,' I thought solemnly as the sick feeling crept back into my abdomen. I gingerly removed the sandals and strapped them on.

>
"I'm sorry," I murmured to the unhearing Namekian that lay at my feet.

>
I stepped onto the patch and pulled up a plant. Cautiously I tasted a leaf. It was bitter, but tasted edibleâ€| barely. My stomach twisted and I quickly spit the rest out of my mouth. 'Maybe I shouldn't have done that,' I thought, holding my abdomen. The nauseous feeling passed and I gazed towards the horizon. Suddenly a bright yellow streak made its way across the sky of the horizon. Someone was flying. The glow disappeared by a nearby hill. I looked around me then headed towards the hill in the distance, hoping with all my heart that the bright streak was a good guy. In case it was a bad guy, my mind was racing with stories and elaborate excuses I could give to explain my presence on Namek. 'What am I doing?' I thought as I walked, 'Even I don't know why I'm here.' Maybe he'd have pity on meâ€| my situation was definitely pathetic enough.

>

>
Next chapter: Vegeta.

> <p><p>

2. Reality Is A State Of Mind: Ch 2

When I reached the peak of the hill, there was no one around, at least no one I could see. I sighed as I looked out onto the red expanse, leaning against a large red rock. I let the wind blow against my face, moving to lean against the staff. Suddenly, an explosion lit up the sky. The sky flamed bright yellow and orange as the explosion echoed across the wilderness. I walked to the each of the hilltop, looking towards the source of the explosion. The sky continued to flicker wildly as explosions continued.

>
A noise to my right made me turn my head. There was a figure approaching, flying towards the hilltop in a blaze of chi. I was frozen as the figure drew closer. 'Please let it be a good guy, please let it be a good guyâ€|' The first thing I noticed was wild spiky hairâ€| a Saiyan. Goku? I hoped. Then my heart dropped to my feet as I recognized his faceâ€| and his name. Vegetaâ€| Prince Vegeta. The evil and arrogant prince of Saiyans who tried to kill Goku and Gohan. My face was frozen. I guessed that my expression showed no sign of fear because it hadn't changed since I turned my head. All my screaming and whimpering was inside my head, and even though I was deafening myself inwardly, I could not utter a word. My mind raced as I tried to think of what to do. I wasn't about to let him kill me, not if I could help it. 'Talk about stating the obvious,' I told myself as he landed on the hilltop a few metres away from me.

>
'Damn,' I thought, 'He's not as short as I thought.' He was still a few inches taller than me. From his comparison to Goku, I had thought this guy was miniature. Goku must be pretty big thenâ€| oh, where is Goku? He was staring at me with an curious expression. His brows were furrowed in his characteristic scowl, but that hardly ever changed. I calmly stared back at him, wondering how I was going to get away. The explosions were still continuing, but they seemed far and distant, the pounding in my ears was too loud. The yellow and orange light flickered across his face and his armour, making his expression all the more intimidating. The wind picked up a little

more, blowing the ribbon of the staff as well as my hair across my face. I couldn't even blink when it blew a strand of hair across my eyes. My wind pulled at my robe, whipping it against my stiffened legs. We stared at each other for what seemed like an eternity.

>
 'He looks intrigued,' I thought. The scowl seemed second nature for him, so I guess that for his natural expression. 'If he were really planning on killing me, he would be smirking,' I thought, trying to remember what I'd read about this arrogant warrior prince. He looked like he was about to say something, but he was cut off by a massive explosion off in the distance. Vegeta was startled and turned around to look at the explosion. Seeing my chance, I leapt behind the large red rock, my noise masked by more explosions. I crouched, getting ready to leap down to the ledge below if Vegeta came after me. I peeked out at him from behind the rock, making sure to be well hidden in the shadows. He had turned back, and was looking around, probably for me. He can't sense me, I realized. I was too glad with relief to think about why it was that he couldn't sense me. Vegeta stared at the spot where I had been standing. I could have laughed at his obvious confusion, but my heart was still blocking my throat.

>
 He wasn't scowling anymore, I noticed. He had a thoughtful look on his face. He almost lookedâ€¦ nice, for a second. Levitating, he floated off the side of the hilltop. He turned back round for a minute, and I pressed myself closer to the rock, but I didn't want to duck completely behind the rock yet. I just had to watch himâ€¦ I didn't know why. After a brief pause, he turned around and flew off. After he disappeared in the horizon, I let out the breath I'd been holding. I knew that Vegeta teamed up with the good guys somewhere in this part of the story, but I was still unsure of what he would do when he was alone. I sighed as I sat down at the edge of the hilltop, dangling my feet off the side. The explosions continued, but now it sounded like fighting. I could hear screaming and yelling between the explosions. 'Maybe I'd better wait until things calm down,' I thought, squinting to the horizon, trying to see who was fighting.

>
 It felt like hours before the fight ended, and I spent several more hours wandering across the wilderness towards the site of the fight. 'It's further than it looks,' I thought, as the elusive fighting area seemed to stretch further away as I continued walking. By the time I reached the area, the fight was over, but the craters where chi blasts had impacted were still smouldering and the dust was still unsettled. I froze as I saw a figure lying in a large crater. 'The loser,' I thought sadly, hesitantly stepping towards the edge of the crater. Then I stopped short as I recognized the armour. Vegeta. Despite my mind yelling at me, I ran down the side of the crater. Then I remembered: Vegeta died on Namek. He was brought back later, but he diedâ€¦ killed by some soldier of Freeza or something. He looked soâ€¦ I don't think powerless is a word ever to be used on Vegeta, but that was as close as he got. I silently knelt down, leaning against my staff. His face was battered and bloody, and his armour was broken and dirt-stained. He had a deep gash in his face, and blood was spurting out of it in weak surges. 'Wait a minute, was his heart still beating?' Sure enough, the surges were constant, but were getting weaker. He was dying. I hesitantly reached out a finger. I had rarely dealt with death before, even the death of relatives. 'But this isn't real,' I kept telling myself as I stared at the dying man lying in front of me. My finger brushed against his bruised cheekbone. He felt real enough.

>
 I froze as his eyes opened painfully. Actually, make that his

eye opened painfully. His other eye was swollen shut. But he wasn't deadâ€¦ yet. He seemed to recognize me, not that he could show it; his face was too battered for any expression to be distinguished. I just stared back at him, my heart twinging slightly. He looked as if he were trying to speak. From the state of his throat, I doubted if he could still talk. But I had a feeling he'd try anyway, and I was pretty sure it'd damn hurt if he tried to breathe in air to speak. They always broke ribs when they fought. Sure enough, I saw him wince in pain. 'Godâ€¦ or rather, Kami, as they call God around here,' I thought, 'At least he could try to die in peace.'

>
 Reaching down, I held my finger gently against his straining blood crusted lips. A weird feeling ran through my abdomen as I touched his lips but I ignored it, I already had too much weird stuff to think about concerning my situation as it was. He seemed to freeze when I touched him, ceasing his effort to speak. My hand took on a life of its own for a few seconds, brushing back across his cheek. I quickly pulled my hand back, looking at it strangely for a few seconds. Why was it tingling, anyway? I looked back at him. He was still staring intently at me. Suddenly, Vegeta's body spasmed, and I sadly watched his clenched face as his body jerked wildly. As suddenly as it started, his body froze, then it slumped back onto the ground with a thump. I didn't know if he was really dead, but I couldn't bring myself to find out. I shut my eyes, trying to rein in the raging emotions that were beginning to surge through my mind. I hardly knew this guy, and yet I was feeling very affected by the concept of his death. I agreed with myself that I didn't react well to death, and that it was a good thing I didn't see many funerals in my time. 'Maybe it's just because it's Vegeta that-' something began speaking in the back of my mind, but I cut it off hastily. Where'd that come from? I shrugged it off as I made my way out of the crater.

>
 I surveyed my surroundings. The barren landscape was blemished with craters and blast marks. I spotted smoke in the distance, rising like a white pillar to join the clouds above. My stomach growled loudly. 'I don't care if they're bad guys,' I decided, 'I'll get food one way or another.' With that, I headed determinedly towards the pillar of smoke.

>
 As it turned out, I had finally found the good guys. They were camped by the lake, roasting some fish to eat. The smell of the roasting meat made me quicken my step as I approached the group gathered around the fire.

>
 It must have been surprising for them. A mysterious dark-haired girl dressed in a robe with a staff walking out of the wilderness. I saw them freeze in what they were doing. Goku had a cooked fish halfway to his mouth. Bulma had her hands frozen on the keyboard of what looked like a modified laptop computer. Gohan was in the middle of chewing his fish.

>
 "Hello," I said quietly. They didn't move. "Mind if I join you?"

>
 There was a long pause before Bulma broke the silence. "Um, yeahâ€¦ sure," she said, motioning for me to sit on an empty stone next to her.

>
 "Thanks," I murmured as I sat down, laying the staff down next to me.

>
 Bulma grabbed a fish on a stick and handed it to me. I smiled gratefully and proceeded to hold the fish over the fire, watching silently as the flames licked the sides of the fish. Goku and Gohan went back to eating, but they didn't take their eyes off me.

>
 "So, umâ€¦ what's your name?" ventured Gohan, after he had finished his fish.

>
 "Quinn," I replied, examining my cooked fish. I was so glad to finally get food. I smiled at him, "You can call me Quinn."
>
 Gohan smiled and his face tinged pink. Why was he blushing? I turned my attention back to my fish, eagerly taking a bite.
>
 "So, Quinn," began Goku, "What are you doing on Namek?"
>
 I stopped in the middle of chewing. "I-Iâ€¦ I don't know," I mumbled quietly.
>
 "What do you mean?" asked Bulma.
>
 "I just appeared here," I answered, putting down my fish. I knew it sounded evasive, but it was the truth. They had to see thatâ€¦ didn't they?
>
 They looked at me quizzically. How was I going to explain this? "I think I'm from another dimension," I said hesitantly.
>
 I explained about my dream, about how it had become reality, and how I had woken up on Namek. I purposely stopped before I reached the part where I ran into Vegeta. I don't know why I did that, I just did.
>
 "Wow," whispered Gohan. "How are you getting home?"
>
 "I-I don't know," I said, feeling a little dizzy. 'What's wrong with me?' I thought, holding my hand to my head as head started to throb. My stomach was beginning to lurch.
>
 "Quinn, are you all right?" asked Goku. His voice sounded distant and far away.
>
 I tried to answer, but the darkness clouded over my eyes and I blacked out.

>

>
Next chapter: Freeza.
> <p><p>

3. Reality Is A State Of Mind: Ch 3

I groaned as I opened my eyes, my head was beginning throb again.

>
 "You're awake."
>
 I looked up to see Bulma sitting next to me. "What happened?" I asked, trying to focus my mind.
>
 "You fainted."
>
 "Oh." I looked down. I was lying on some sort of sleeping bag. My staff lay on the ground next to me. I tried to sit up, but stopped when the world starting to spin.
>
 "Here." Bulma handed me a glass of water. I thanked her hoarsely and sipped the water.
>
 "Have you eaten anything, besides the fish?" Bulma asked, opening a capsule that sprouted forth a box containing hundreds of bottles.
>
 "Um, no," I began, my mind slightly foggy, "Wait, there was that weird plant by the dome houses."
>
 "Ah, I see," said Bulma, digging through the box, "That stuff's poisonous for humans." She stopped and looked at me. "You are human, aren't you?"
>
 "I think so," I replied, watching her resume her digging. "Where I come from I am." My mind returned to my current predicament... how the hell was I going to get back?
>
 Bulma gave a small cry of triumph as she lifted a bottle out of the box. She took a pill out of the bottle and handed it to me, indicating that I was to swallow it. I looked at the pill, then at her. 'Ah, what the heck,' I thought, downing the pill.
>
 "That does feel better," I said. My mind was clearing and my

stomach had stopped kicking me.

>
 "So," said Bulma, her face thoughtful, "Tell me about your dimension."

>
 I looked at her doubtfully. How was I supposed to describe my reality? I studied her. She looked about my age, a red headband seated amid her green hair. I looked down at the cup of water. I decided to start with the main subjects.

>
 "Well, there we only hear of Saiyans and the dragon balls as a story."

>
 "You mean they don't exist?" Bulma looked surprised.

>
 "We don't think they do, but we're a very secular society. Dragons and aliens are mostly fiction to us."

>
 "I see," murmured Bulma, "So what do you look for then?"

>
 "We still try to get wishes granted, only without the dragon balls it takes a different kind of effort than looking for items all over the country. We're all after the same things: fame, fortune€| happiness."

>
 "I guess," she said thoughtfully. "So, how do you like this dimension?" She smiled at me, her eyes becoming weird little semi-circles.

>
 "I dunno," I answered, plopping my head back onto the sleeping bag. "I haven't met anyone else€| except for Vegeta." I snapped my mouth shut, my eyes wide. 'Uh-oh,' I thought.

>
 Bulma's eyes snapped open when I mentioned the Saiyan prince. "Y-you ran into Vegeta?"

>
 The emotions were beginning to rage again, like a whirlwind through my mind. I turned my head away. What was wrong with me? "H-he was dying," I managed softly, willing my voice not to quiver. My mind felt strange, what was this weird emotion that kept welling up?

>
 Bulma quietly scooted over to me, gently stroking my long hair. She made soft little crooning noises like a mother does to her crying child. "It's okay," she whispered quietly.

>
 "I'm sorry," I sat up, my hand on my forehead, trying to stem the flood of thoughts and emotions in my mind. "I haven't had much experience in dealing with death."

>
 Something in my abdomen twisted, like it did when I lied. 'But I'm not lying,' I thought. Ignoring it, I continued, "I don't really know what to do when a person dies in front of me."

>
 "Don't worry," Bulma laid her hand on my shoulder, "It's normal to hate watching people die."

>
 "I know, I know," I murmured, but that was something else, something deeper. Covering up the uncertainty with resignation, I turned to her and smiled weakly.

>
 "I know how it feels," she whispered, "Krillin died too, and Goku died a couple of times. But the dragon balls brought him back."

>
 'So I might see Vegeta again,' my mind thought. 'Why the hell did I think that??' I thought straight after. My face must have looked confused, because Bulma looked at me questioningly.

>
 "Um, did you know Vegeta?" I asked, trying to continue the conversation, saying the first thing that came to my mind.

>
 Bulma lowered her eyes, her brow furrowed in thought. "Well," she began after a pause, "I didn't really know him, but I met him."

>
 "Oh, you didn't know him that well?"

>
 "Not really. As far as I know, he is one of the most arrogant, stuck-up, egotistical person I know." Bulma's statement was said matter-of-factly, not spitefully.

>
 "I guess that's what comes with being a Saiyan prince," I mused.

>
 "Which he mentions every three statements," said Bulma, then she lowered her voice to try and sound like the conceited Saiyan prince. "I am the high and mighty prince Vegeta. How dare you be taller than me, Kakarrot?"

>
 I giggled, then seeing Bulma's exaggerated scowl, I burst out laughing. Bulma couldn't hold the scowl and joined me in a giggling fit.

>
 It was then Gohan wandered over. "Whatcha laughin' at?"

>
 "N-nothing," giggled Bulma, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand, beginning to calm down. "I'll go check on the dragon balls."

>
 "Will you be all right?" She turned back, looking at me worriedly.

>
 I smiled, "Yeah, thank you."

>
 She grinned and walked away. I turned to Gohan.

>
 He was looking at me intently, and grinned bashfully when I looked at him questioningly. "You're very pretty," he said, looking at me with big kiddy eyes.

>
 My mind sniggered. 'You should see some of the other girls in my reality, kid,' I said in my head.

>
 I smiled at him. "You're kinda cute yourself," I replied, patting the ground next to me. Gohan walked over and sat down.

>
 "Really?" He tinged pink.

>
 "Yeah, I'll bet you'll be a real lady-killer when you grow up." He definitely was going to be one, as far as I knew. I'd seen more than enough pics of a grown Gohan.

>
 Gohan grinned a weird grin and held his hand to the back of his head.

>
 "And with those huge Saiyan muscles, the girls won't leave you alone," I leaned over and tapped his nose with my finger.

>
 Gohan went bright red and looked down. "I'm only half-Saiyan," he mumbled, trying to be modest, "The other half is human."

>
 "And you better be damn proud of it." I pretended to frown, waving my finger in his face. He laughed then leaned back on his hands to look at the sky.

>
 "Are you human?" he asked, "Cause I can't sense you."

>
 "Where I come from I'm human," I answered, turning my own head to the sky. "But I don't know why you can't sense me. What does it mean if you can't sense me?"

>
 "Usually it means that you're not alive," answered Goku, walking over to join his son. "But you look alive enough to me." He smiled as he sat down next to Gohan.

>
 "Oh." I mumbled, quietly staring at the sky. I wasn't sure what to think, I already had too many things to think about as it was.

>
 Suddenly, an explosion rocked the ground. 'Not again,' I thought, but stopped short as a flying pod landed nearby.

>
 A figure stepped out of the pod, his tail thumping onto the ground.

>
 'No,' I thought, my heart crawling back into my throat.

>
 "So, Kakarrot, I've finally caught up with you," a weird voice said, and my heart dropped down to my belly.

>
 'Freeza,' I thought, 'but this isn't where he was supposed to meet Goku.' My presence must have slowed them down. What other drastic events could I have changed just by being here?

>
 Goku calmly stood up. "What can I do for you, Freeza?"

>
 Freeza laughed. My spine chilled and my heart stopped beating

for a second.

>
 "What do you want you overgrown lizard?" Bulma yelled, but whimpered when Freeza turned to look at her.

>
 "Annoying human." Freeza narrowed his eyes, "I might have to kill you, too."

>
 Bulma yelped and ran behind a rock, but Freeza sent a chi blast at the rock, disintegrating it easily. He stretched out a hand towards Bulma, and I could see the power crackling around his fingers. She looked frozen in fear.

>
 "No!" The yell escaped my lips before I could stop it.

>
 Freeza turned to look at me. I forced my knees to lock so I wouldn't collapse under his gaze.

> "Another human," he said, his black lips curling in a sadistic smile. "Maybe I'll start with you."

> "Leave them out of this," growled Goku, powering up.

> "Don't worry, I won't forget you, saiyan," Freeza's voice dripped with malice as he spit out the name of the almost-exterminated race.

> Before I could react, Freeza stretched out his other hand to Goku while snapping his already outstretched hand towards me. I opened my mouth to scream as I watched a chi blast heading straight for me.

> My feet refused to move, but my mind was racing. 'No.' The single thought echoed through my mind as the world seemed to slow down. 'No, no, no, no, no!' As my mind pronounced each syllable I felt an anger begin to build up in my belly, a rage burning in my chest. How dare this despicable lizard presume to end my life? It was my life, dammit! My parents always said I needed to control my temper, but there was no parent to stop me now. The rage began to course through my veins as teeth clenched in hatred.

> "No!" The yell was more a shout of defiance rather than fear, and I saw surprise on Freeza's face.

> I stretched out my hands and disintegrated the two chi blasts.

Gohan, who was running towards me, stopped short, staring at me. Goku and Bulma looked at me in shock, but it was nothing compared to the shock on Freeza's face. I grinned spitefully at Freeza, and I felt the familiar rage taking hold. But this time I felt a power behind the rage, it was no longer plain anger. I felt the power accumulate in my outstretched hands.

> Turning to Freeza, I let out a shout of fury as the raw power exited my hands in red streaked beams. They impacted Freeza, throwing him onto the ground.

> "No," I heard him wheeze as he tried to get up. I walked over to him, the dust settling around me. I actually saw fear on the pitiful lizard's face.

> "Noâ€| moreâ€| killingâ€| for you," I said, enunciating each word in his face. My hands began to glow again as I stretched them over him. The glow lit up his terrified face as the beams shot out again, and in a second, he was no more.

> As the rage began to seep away from my veins, I felt my knees weaken and I slid to the ground.

> "Are you all right?" said Bulma, rushing to my side.

> "Whoa," said Gohan, staring from me to the spot where Freeza had been.

> Goku walked over and helped me up. "Sorry I ruined your fight," I mumbled, collapsing against him as my knees refused to lock.

> "What do you mean?" he looked surprised. "You just saved us a lot of time."

> "I guess that's the end of Freeza," murmured Bulma, popping open a capsule. Goku's ship appeared with a cartoonish "poof".

> 'Never ceases to amaze me,' I thought, but my mind wavered unsteadily.

> "H-he might be back," I whispered, remembering the Dragon Ball Z series. I saw Bulma's lips move in a question, but her voice drained into a receding whirlpool along with my surroundings as I let the darkness slip over my eyes.

>
Next chapter: On the way home... home?

4. Reality Is A State Of Mind: Ch 4

Author's Note:

>So far, so good... Quinn's got something for Vegeta, even if she doesn't know it yet (evil grin). By the way, Quinn is in her early twenties. I'm not sure if Gohan has a really big crush on her, but he's probably at least ten years younger than her. These characters are acting by themselves and I'm just doing my best to make them end up where I want them to.
--Quinn

>_____

>When I came to, I was on the ship heading home. I looked around. I was on a small bed in a cabin, and I could see the stars zooming past the porthole. I got up slowly, hoping that my brain wouldn't protest. After steadying myself on my feet I made my way over to the porthole, feeling the ship hum beneath my feet.

>"What have you gotten yourself into, Quinn?" I murmured to myself as I watched us fly through space. Taking a deep breath, I smoothed down my robe I turned and walked out of the room, the door whooshing shut behind me.

>I looked around. The ship didn't look the way I remembered it... or at least no like I thought I remembered it. Bulma must've modified it a little. My eyes darted around... okay, scratch that. Bulma must've modified it a lot. It seemed more like a huge starship now. I sighed. Speaking of people... some human company would be nice.

>I could hear the ship's engine droning as I wandered down the huge corridor, my sandals padding across the thin carpet. Hearing noises coming further down, I followed my ears and ended up in front of a large reinforced door. Peering through the double glazed porthole into the room beyond, I saw Goku and Gohan floating in mid-air in a large dome-shaped area.
'This must be the gravity chamber,' I thought, remembering an episode about Goku's trip to Namek.

>
"Ka-me-ha-me-HA!" A huge beam shot out of Goku's hand, and I watched Gohan expertly flip to avoid it as it impacted the side of the gravity chamber.
>
"Whoa," I mumbled, as I watched them continue to spar, dodging each other's attacks. After about twenty minutes I started to get bored. Goku and Gohan were in front of each other delivering and blocking a flurry of attacks that I couldn't even see. Sighing, I headed back down the corridor. Maybe Bulma would be better company.

>
'Or maybe not,' I thought fifteen minutes later. I had found Bulma in the cockpit, working on a few experimental robots. She seemed engrossed with her work, flitting around the room with tools and spare parts while chatting cheerfully to me about Kami knows what.

>
"â€|So if you de-fragmentize the main processing unit, it would be able to compute the flight pattern to an nth degree, considering

of course the constant error value of random possibilities."
>
I blinked, and then I blinked again. I could handle maths, hell, I passed calculus years ago, but what language was this girl speaking?

>
"So are you feeling better?" Bulma's voice floated into my thoughts.

>
"Huh? Oh, yeah, much better. Though I don't know what I'm going to do now." I looked down and fiddled with the sash of my robe.

>
"Oh, that's okay. Once we get back to Chikyuu you can stay at Capsule Corporation until you figure things out." Bulma walked over, pulling off her gloves. Her clean hands contrasted with the dark oil on her overalls. She smiled at me, dimples forming in her grease-stained cheek.

>
"Thanks," I smiled, "That really means a lot to me."

>
"Oh, it's nothing, Capsule Corporation is huge. Another occupant won't change much." Bulma turned to the computer and began calculating something to do with schematics and flight projection. I decided to leave while my brain still functioned.

>
"Um, I'll just go see what Goku and Gohan are doing." I began to back out of the room.

>
"Okay." Bulma didn't turn around, apparently already engrossed in her calculations.

>
I exhaled loudly as the door whooshed shut behind me. After pausing for a few seconds, I headed back down the corridor towards the gravity chamber.

>
The door was open when I arrived. Apparently Goku and Gohan had finished training and went to cool down somewhere. I entered the room, my footsteps echoing in the large metallic dome. The chamber was pretty big, but I guess it had to be to accommodate Saiyan training. I smiled to myself, wandering over to the middle where the central control column stood. I looked around, making sure I was alone. Then, shutting my eyes, I began to do my own training... trying to stretch my stiff body.

>
My mind ran free as I moved my body. All the thoughts that had been pushed back during the days before surfaced like bubbles in calm water. How did I get here? How was I going to get back? What was this reality? Was it even real at all? What happened to my world? The thoughts began to flow faster and my movements quickened accordingly. Then my thoughts turned to these people, these characters from a cartoon show, one which I was now a part of. These warriors, these Saiyans, were they real now? Vegeta, their prince, I had actually met him. Is he really as arrogant as Bulma says? I remembered his eyes, they were proud, yes, but there was something else there. Something I couldn't put my finger on. I saw it when he recognized me down in the crater. It was an emotion, a feeling; one which I was now feeling. One that was now pulsating in my brain, with each beat getting stronger. The look in his eyes flashed in my mind again. What was happening to me?

>
I stopped suddenly, gasping for breath, my eyes still shut and my arms hanging lifelessly by my sides. My heart was pounding in my ears again. Gulping back a breath, I buried my face in my hands, trying to slow down my mind.

>
"Are you okay?" I jerked my head up. Goku was standing by the door, looking at me worriedly.

>
"I-I'm fine," I said, bending my head back down, "Just a little woozy." I looked back up at him, managing a weak smile.

>
"I dunno, you seemed pretty agitated before you stopped." He walked over to me.

>
I sighed and looked back down. "Yeah, well, I guess I have a lot

to think about."

>
I took a shaky breath and carefully sat down on the floor of the chamber.

>
"I'll bet you do," said Goku, sitting down next to me. There was a long pause. "So what was that you were doing before?"

>
I looked at Goku, "Just some stretches I made up myself. They help me think straight."

>
There was another pause. "So do you really think Freeza's coming back?" asked Goku.

>
"I don't really know, but there is a chance."

>
"Well if he does show up, you can zap him with your laser beam again."

>
I smiled at Goku, then turned away. "I don't even know how I did that. I've never been able to do that in my world."

>
"Really? Warriors do it all the time round here."

>
"Am I a warrior?" I looked at Goku, unsure of his statement.

>
"You seemed trained enough, and that beam must have been really powerful to be able to get rid of Freeza."

>
"I've never trained to become a warrior."

>
"It's not really hard, I could teach you a little."

>
I looked at him incredulously. "You're a Saiyan, you're a born warrior."

>
"But humans can do many things too," he assured me, "At least let me show you some moves." He got up, offering me a hand.

>
I thought for a second, but then decided that it wouldn't hurt to give it a try. It might actually help if I was to survive in this reality. I took his hand and he pulled me up.

>
"Okay, let's start with the basic moves." Goku got into a ready stance, and I mimicked him.

>
We went through somersaults and flips to kicks and punches. He taught me how to anticipate an attack from a Saiyan, which was different. Saiyans attack with a passion, with a hunger for the kill, yet without a loss or sacrifice of technique. I was told how to modify my defence to deflect or dodge Saiyan punches and kicks, as the simple forearm block would probably end with a broken arm for me. My blows would have to be harder and well placed, as Saiyans don't bruise much less break easily.

>
"Thanks," I murmured, as the training session ended. "Why are you telling me this?"

>
"You never know when you might have to fight a Saiyan," he answered, looking very serious.

>
"Well, I hope I won't be here long enough to start a fight with one of your kind," I answered sincerely.

>
"I dunno. The rest of my kind is usually very easy to aggravate." He smiled.

>
I smiled back as we headed towards the door. "I'll keep that in mind if I run into another Saiyan." Suddenly, my thoughts returned to Vegeta, the other Saiyan. Before I could stop myself, the same feeling started to throb in my brain, my breathing became ragged. I stumbled and Goku caught me before I fell.

>
"Whoa, you'd better get some rest."

>
I pulled myself out of his grip. "No, I'll be fine," I insisted, walking out the door before he could stop me.

>_____

>Next chapter: Shen Long.

> <p><p>

5. Reality Is A State Of Mind: Ch 5

The days passed in a hazy blur, the feeling becoming a constant pulsation in the back of my mind. I hardly spoke, spending my time staring out of a porthole. The whole time I was fighting with myself. I had to get itâ€¦ no, himâ€¦ out of my mind, but I couldn't, every time I stopped to think, it would be thereâ€¦ he would be there.

>
 "Quinn, we're here." Gohan's little voice snapped me out the constant flow of my thoughts. I looked around the cockpit for a dazed second. We've landed?

>
 "Huh? Oh, yeah, okay." I looked at his face, staring at me anxiously. I smiled at him. "I'll just go get my things."

>
 I wandered to my cabin and gathered my 'things'. The only thing I had to carry was my staff. I sighed as I fingered the long red ribbon. 'What am I going to do?' I thought, walking down the corridor towards the exit.

>
 Bulma, Goku, and Gohan had already disembarked and were chatting with their friends and family outside. I squinted as I entered into the sunlight, a welcome breeze blowing the stale air from around me. The chatter ceased as they saw me. My eyes adjusted to the light to see a group of people staring at me.

>
 "Guys, this is Quinn," said Goku, stepping up to me.

>
 "Hello," I murmured.

>
 Gohan piped up. "She's from another dimension, and she can shoot laser beams and stuff. She can fight good, too."

>
 I smiled, and the others regarded me for a few seconds. A woman I recognized as Chi Chi. Goku's wife and Gohan's mother, walked up to me. "I'm Chi Chi," she said warmly, "You must be starving, eating the ship's food for so long."

>
 I smiled nervously. I suddenly felt hungry, I hadn't eaten that much since I started thinking about itâ€¦ about him. The thoughts were beginning to stir and I quickly answered before my mind had a chance to start rushing again. "Yes, I am actually."

>
 "Yay, food!" Gohan yelled out.

>
 Goku looked up. "Where?"

>
 Chi Chi gathered up her skirts and rushed off, Bulma's mother hot on her heels. "In a minute," she yelled as she ran into the kitchen to start the food.

>
 The rest of them returned to their talking, and I noticed an old man with glasses staring at me. He was saying something to a creature that looked like a pig. Bulma was standing behind them and she seemed shocked for a second, then she pulled a big hammer out of nowhere and hit them on their heads. I was surprised for a minute, but they weren't that hurt. It seemed like they got that a lot.

>
 Bulma walked up to me. "I'll show you your room," she said, taking my hand. She glared at the old man and the pig as she passed them and they cringed.

>
 She led me into a big dome shaped building. We walked through a living room and up a big flight of stairs, down a long corridor and into a very big room. "Here we are," she said, gesturing around the huge room.

>
 "Whoa," was all I could manage. I managed to stumble forward to look around. "T-this is huge," I managed to stammer, turning to Bulma.

>
 "You should see my room," grinned Bulma.

>
 "Thank you," I mumbled, fiddling with my robe.

>
 "Hmm," said Bulma, studying me with one squinted eye. "We'll have to get you a new wardrobe too."

>
 "Huh? Really?"

>
 "Yeah, but we can do that later. I'll let you rest. Lunch should be in an hour or so."

>
 "Okayâ€| thank you."

>
 "Hey, don't worry about it." Bulma smiled and walked out the door, shutting it behind her.

>
 'Maybe this isn't going to be so bad after all,' I thought, wandering over to sit on the bed, glancing round my huge room. 'But this isn't real!' my mind yelled. 'None of it is!' Then what was real? My head was beginning to hurt again. Sighing, I plopped back onto the bed, letting the staff fall from my hand.

>
 "What am I going to do?" I groaned, covering my face with my hands.

>
 I decided to take a walk. I needed to clear my mind. Clutching my staff, I made my way out of the building, almost getting lost on the way. 'Damn, Bulma has a big house,' I thought as I finally stepped out into the sun.

>
 I wandered off into the nearby forests and ended up sitting by a small stream. The smooth sound of the water was comforting, soothing to my weary mind. I sighed, leaning over to look at my reflection, the flowing hair, the large eyes, the small noseâ€| was I still the same person? My thoughts must have drifted off because the sun was casting longer shadows when I came out of my daze. At least an hour had passed. 'I'd better get going,' I thought, hastily getting up.

>
 When I arrived back at Capsule Corporation, the smell of food was in the air. My stomach growled hungrily as I jogged over to the kitchen.

>
 "Great, you're here!" Chi Chi came over and dragged me over to the table, set with steaming plates of tasty goodness. I sat down next to Bulma, looking eagerly at the plate of steamed dumplings in front of me.

>
 Bulma leaned over to me and whispered. "If you want food, you'd better get what you can while you can get it, once Goku gets to work there won't be anything left to poke a fork at."

>
 I smiled, but as soon as the meal began, I realized the truth of her words. Goku ate like an animalâ€| a big animal, and Gohan was close behind. Chi Chi seemed pleased that her food was appreciated, and I realized that if I'd better grab quickly if I wanted to appreciate it at all.

>
 I snatched two handfuls of dumplings before Goku grabbed the whole plate, quietly munching them as I watched the havoc in front of me. Chi Chi kept the food coming, plates of noodles, spring rolls, and other delicious dishes were brought to the table and devoured just as quickly. Somehow I managed to get my fill, composed mainly of snatches and grabs while avoiding the teeth and hands that moved too fast for my liking.

>
 The table was finally calm. Goku was leaning back, licking his fingers happily while Gohan was sitting contentedly, a satisfied smile on his face.

>
 "That was great, Chi Chi," said Goku, letting out a contented sigh.

>
 "I'm glad you liked it, Goku." Chi Chi walked over and sat on his lap happily giving him a small peck on the cheek.

>
 "Should we use the dragon balls now?" asked Bulma, putting down her napkin.

>
 "Yeah, let's," agreed Gohan, eagerly hopping off his chair.

>
 The group made their way outside onto the grassy lawn. Bulma quickly assembled the orange balls on the lawn and summoned the

dragon. There was a bright flash of light as Shen Long appeared, his green scaly body shimmering. Wait a secâ€¦ green, shimmering? Was this the reason for my appearance in this reality? Thisâ€¦ this, dragon? What did I do to make him do this? I had to know.
>
 "I wish that all the fighters who were killed by Freeza and his men on Namek be brought back to life and return here to Chikyuu."

>
 The dragon nodded at Bulma. "It shall be done."
>
 "I wish that all the rest of the Namekians and all the homes on Namek destroyed by those who sought the dragon balls be restored on their planet."
>
 The dragon nodded once again. "It shall be done."
>
 "Hmmâ€¦" said Bulma, "What shall we wish for next?"
>
 I stepped up quickly. "Shen Long, tell me why I am here."

>
 There was a murmur through the crowd as I advanced towards the dragon.

>
 The dragon looked at me and smiled, its long fangs glinting.

"Ah, Quinn, how are you liking it here in this reality?"

>
 "Why am I here?" I pleaded.

>
 "You wished it so."

>
 "But it was in my reality. How?"

>
 "Yes, I suppose it was not an actual wish I had to grant, but you felt it strongly."

>
 My mind raced as I thought on the dragon's words. "But I am not really hereâ€¦ I don't even have a ki!" I sputtered.

>
 The dragon narrowed its eyes. "You are here," it boomed, and I shrank back slightly. Then it continued calmly. "You may not be like them, but you are here."

>
 I stood silently, still trying to understand.

>
 Seeing this, the dragon went on. "You are not like them because you are not of them." Its voice seemed almost fatherly. "You were not born into this existence, and so you do not have the same life-force they do. Howeverâ€¦"

>
 I held my breath as the dragon paused. "However," it repeated, and then it paused again before continuing, "You do possess power because power in this reality originates from the emotions. Anger, hatred, passion, raw determinationâ€¦ all these are what the warriors rely on to summon their strength."

>
 "There are many strong emotions in you, Quinn, and because you were not of this reality, when your emotions became too strong they became expressed as powerâ€¦ a great power. I can sense that it's still not within your control to summon this power, but all it needs is a trigger." The dragon smirked at me, as if it knew something I didn't.

>
 'Of course it does,' my mind grumbled, 'it's the Eternal Dragon.'

>
 The thoughts rushed through my mind as I sought to make sense of what the dragon had just said. "Butâ€¦ but I didn't wishâ€¦" I stuttered, my voice breaking slightly.

>
 "Very well," sighed Shen Long, "I shall retain this last wish for you. If you so wish I can return you to your world, but if you do not, then you shall remain here and I shall allow you to use that wish here in this reality."

>
 Return to my world? I realized with a sinking heart that I wasn't as thrilled to return as I thought I'd be.

>
 "How long do I have?" I murmured.

>
 "I shall give you three days, Quinn, I will appear to you at the same time in three days. May you choose well."

>
 With that, Shen Long disappeared. I stood there, unsure of what

to do. I hated making decisions, and now this decision was going to affect the rest of my existence big time.

>
 "You okay?" asked Bulma, walking over and putting an arm on my shoulder.

>
 "Yeah," I mumbled.

>
 "Hey, there's Piccolo," yelled Gohan, running over to his teacher. I turned around. There was a huge green man in a cape and turban walking out of the forest. With him were a longhaired dude with a scarred face and the bald guy I recognized as Krillin.

>
 "Yamcha!" yelled Bulma, running over to greet the longhaired guy. I smiled a little as the crowd went to greet the newly arrived warriors, but I froze when I recognized a fourth warrior walking out of the woods. He was shorter than the rest of them and his armour looked familiar.

>
 'Vegeta,' I thought. For a split second, I wanted to follow Bulma's example, but I caught myself in surprise. 'Something must be seriously wrong with me,' I thought, looking around.

>
 "Vegeta," I heard Goku's voice drift over, "There's someone you should meet."

>
 'Uh-oh,' I thought, looking around desperately. Moving as fast as I could, I dashed through the kitchen door.

>
 As I disappeared into the building, I could hear Goku's puzzled voice. "Huh? Where'd she go?"

>
 I didn't stop running until I reached my room. Slamming the door behind me, I walked over to the bed. Collapsing face down, I mumbled miserably into the sheets, "What am I going to do?"

>
 I had three days to decide whether I was going to return to my worldâ€| or stay here with these peopleâ€| as this person. What did I have to return to anyway? My family? Sure I would miss them, but what kind of life did I have there? Here I had real power and real ability. There all the power lay behind desks and machines, somewhere I didn't want to be. Here I could live a life where I had no need to impress or pretend. Here I could be with people with raw power and no pretencesâ€| here I could be with himâ€|

>
 'Stop it!' I yelled inwardly, thumping my head onto the bed.

>
 "It's going to be a long three days," I groaned, "Long and painfulâ€|"

>_____

>Next chapter: Vegeta... again... <p><p>

6. Reality Is A State Of Mind: Ch 6

That night I lay staring up at the ceiling. That same phrase played over in my mind. "What am I going to do? What am I going to do? What am I going to doâ€|"

>
 Groaning, I lifted a pillow and smothered it against my face. I was going insane. Actually, that didn't sound bad. Mental patients get those nice little padded cells I could bang my head against.

>
 "Kami, I am going mad," I muttered, flinging aside the pillow and sitting up.

>
 I could see the moon shining through the thin curtains. They must have wished it back a while ago. It was full, a perfect round circle of pale yellow light.

>
 Walking over to the window, I slipped on the robe and opened the curtains. It looked so peaceful, so serene. I slid open the door

and let a warm breeze blow against my face, stirring the quiet night air. Tying the sash I stepped onto the cool tiles of the balcony.

>
 The moon cast its soft light onto the ground, giving everything a pale glow. Sighing, I leaned against the railing, letting the warm breeze play with my hair and calm my mind as I gazed at the round orb of light in the silent night sky. Then I felt like someone was watching me. It didn't feel dangerous, the presence felt soâ€¦ familiar. I looked down. There was someone standing in the courtyard below me. It was him. His customary scowl was gone and his face looked royal, the moonlight highlighting the sharp angles of his cheekbones. His arms were crossed across his chest and he was gazing at me intently, as if I were a vision. I could say the same for him myself.

>
 It seemed like hours before either one of us moved. The breeze blew gently, carrying a few leaves across the courtyard. Somewhere an insect chirped. Not taking his eyes off me, he began to float off the ground, approaching my balcony. I didn't move a muscle as I watched his approach. I don't think that I could have if I'd tried.

>
 He was only a few feet away, floating in front of me, his eyes level with mine. I couldn't pull my eyes away, or any other part of my body for that matter. If it seemed like hours when our eyes locked while he was on the ground, then it was a few years he spent floating in front of my balcony.

>
 "Hello Vegeta," I said softly, my voice hardly louder than the breeze which pulled gently at my hair.

>
 He just continued to gaze at me. "You," he murmured.

>
 His voice was low and smooth, like the rustle of silk. I forgot to breathe. He uncrossed his arms and reached out a gloved hand, tentatively, as if I would disappear if he moved too quickly. My hand took on a life of its own and I watched as it met his, palm to palm, finger to finger. I heard him take in a sharp breath as our hands met, and I think my own heart skipped a beat or three.

>
 That familiar feeling welled up inside me again, but this time it felt right, good. My thoughts about home were banished and I wanted to stay here, like this, forever. How does he do it? Why does he have so much power over me? I felt like a willing prisoner, tangled up in this strange sensation. I had to think, but I couldn't, not while he was in front of me, not while his hand touched mine. I had to leaveâ€¦ my mind was swallowing me up. I wanted to be here and it scared me.

>
 I saw a look of concern flash across his face and he moved his other hand, as if to touch my face. My heart pounded in my ears. I could feel my pulse in my throat. A cloud drifted across the moon, darkening the night for a minute. All I could feel was my hand on his.

>
 Forcing my feet to move, I softly ran back into the room, trying to ignore the emptiness that filled me as my hand left his. I stood away from the light of the re-emerging moon, watching him from the darkness of my room. His hand was still outstretched, the other hand half extended, as if to grasp the air. My hand ached to reach out, and I had to grab my arm, trying to soothe my tingling fingers.

>
 I watched as he drew back his hands. It was all I could do to keep from crying out when he held the hand I had touched to his cheek.

> Biting on my lower lip, I managed to reduce my cry to a shaky breath. I shut my eyes, trying to dam the tears that were welling up. When I opened them again, he was gone and the moon stared at me, round, full, and untouchable.

> "Vegeta," I whispered, letting a tear slide down my cheek unhindered.

>
Next chapter: Guess who's movin' in?

7. Reality Is A State Of Mind: Ch 7

It was late morning when I stumbled into the kitchen. "Good morning, Quinn," greeted Bulma's mum.

>
 "Good morning," I returned, "What smells so good?"

>
 "Oh, it's just waffles. The syrup is on the table."

>
 I licked my lips eagerly and sat down. Bulma's mum piled the steaming waffles onto my plate and I readily chowed down.

>
 "So, have you heard?" asked Bulma's mum, handing the dishes to a domestic robot who then piled them in the dishwasher.

>
 "Heard what?" I asked around a mouthful of waffle.

>
 "We have a new house guest."

>
 I watched her as she picked up the dishes in the sink. "Really? Who?"

>
 Just then Bulma walked in, her glasses perched on her nose.

"Mum, I've gone over the company project papers, where's Dad?" she queried, pulling the glasses off and rubbing her eyes. Noticing me, she smiled. "Hey Quinn, how was your night?"

>
 I smiled back, "I slept some." 'And spent the rest of the time thinking of him,' I added to myself. "So who's the new house guest?" I asked, popping another forkful of waffle into my mouth.

>
 "Oh, you heard?" she said, "It's Vegeta."

>
 I stopped chewing. "Who?"

>
 Bulma grinned. "Yeah, I know," she began to gush, "I was shocked to see him too, but I guess he was killed by Freeza's men and we did wish for all those killed by Freeza and his men to be brought back but it was such surprise because we weren't expecting it and he didn't have anywhere else to go besides he would want to use the new gravity room my father and I are working on and it would be so much easier if he stayed close by so I went ahead and invited him to stay here and he didn't want to at first but when he heard about the gravity room he agreed so now he's staying here and there you have it." She grinned at me, not at all breathless.

>
 I stared at her, my mouth still full. After a minute, I managed to swallow the waffle. "So is he staying near the gravity room?"

>
 "Yes, he will be. The gravity room's not up yet, it's going to be put out in the courtyard. It'll be right in front of your balcony. In factâ€¦" said Bulma, her face thoughtful for a minute, "I think he's staying near your room."

>
 "He's what??"

>
 "Yeah, he is," Bulma nodded, "I told Dad to show him to a room overlooking the courtyard, on the guest wing. There are only two: yours and another one, now it's his." She smiled at me again.

>
 I looked down at the waffle on my plate. I suddenly didn't feel hungry.

>
 "Don't worry," said Bulma, misreading my silence, "He's been pretty civilised so far, hasn't tried to destroy the world or anything."

>
 'Kami, destroy the world?' I thought, 'Maybe my worldâ€¦ the one I don't want to return to because of him.' Wait, what was that? Uh-oh, this isn't good.

>
 "I-I think I'll take a walk," I mumbled, getting up.

>
 "Wait, you haven't finished your breakfast," said Bulma's mum,

but I was already out the door.

>

> 'I can't believe this,' I thought as I raced into the woods. 'He's already got me and we haven't even said a complete sentence to each other.'

> I ducked a branch, angrily pushing the leaves out of the way. Why was I willing to give up an entire life, one that I had already lived for over twenty odd years, just because of him? I smiled to myself. And my mum thought I was determined to be single. Here I was, considering altering my entire existence for a guyâ€| no ordinary guy though.

> 'He's a prince,' I thought, 'I always said I wanted a Prince Charming. Though I doubt 'charming' is the word to describe him.' I smirked as I leapt over a moss-covered log, feeling the soft moistness on my fingers.

> I reached the stream where I'd stopped at yesterday. I recognized my staff sitting on the ground by the gurgling brook. Sighing, I picked it up, looking over the dark wood. I looked around. There was no sound except for the running water and the wind through the trees. I looked down at the creek and leaned the side of my head against the staff, wishing that my worries could flow away so easily. 'But they won't,' I thought, shutting my eyes.

> I froze as I felt a hand on my hair, running through it once. I knew that presence. He was there. "Vegeta," I murmured, not opening my eyes.

> "Who are you?" I heard him ask, the tips of his glove lightly brushing my cheek. "Are you some vision sent to invade my thoughts, to haunt my dreams?"

> 'Haunt his dreams? Invade his thoughts?' I thought, 'He's doing a good deal of invading and haunting himself.'

> I looked up at him, hoping that he wouldn't see the emotion in my eyes. "I am no vision, Vegeta," I whispered. Pausing, I turned back to the stream, gazing at the reflection that was supposed to be me. "But how real I am in this world I do not know."

> He stepped back in surprise. "You're that girl from another dimension?"

> I looked up at the sky, watching as the white clouds moved slowly across the blue expanse. "Another dimension, another world, another realityâ€| whatever it's called." I turned back to him. "Yes, I am."

> "You," he breathed, staring at me, his eyes wide, "You're the one who killed Freeza?"

> "I guess so," I smiled sadly, "But I'm not much of a warrior."

> "Why not?" he snorted, suddenly his arrogant self again, "You have a weapon."

> I looked at him, puzzled. "I do?"

> He nodded, motioning the staff I was leaning against. "That's not just a walking stick." He gave me a 'how-could-you-not-know' look.

> I looked at the staff. Its wood was unusually hard and it felt heavier than most walking sticks.

> "I take it you don't know how to use it." He walked over and held out his hand. Hesitantly, I handed over my staff.

> "The wood came from a planet not far from Namek," he said, tapping a gloved finger against the dark wood. "Its structure is such that it can disperse chi energy. It can deflect chi blasts back at the attacker or plunge through an aura to kill the enemy."

> I grimaced, amazed at his matter-of-fact way of describing deathblows.

> "It is an extremely advantageous weapon," he continued. Then he turned to look at me, "Provided you know how to use it."

> "Doâ€| do you know how to use it?" I asked, though I had a feeling I already knew the answer.

> "Of course," he snorted again, "As the prince of the Saiyans I am skilled in the use of all weapons known to our race."

> "Of course," I murmured, holding back a smile. I stepped up to him, looking him in the eye. I saw a nervous look cross his face as I stopped in front of him.

> "Could you teach me?" I asked softly, my gaze unwavering.

> I saw him squirm uncomfortably, our faces inches apart. Suddenly I had the urge to run my finger along his cheek like I had back on Namek, and I had to fight myself to keep my hands down.

> His breath was shallow. I could feel it warm and moist against my face. His eyes had lost their proud smugness and I could see something else behind those dark pupils, something that I'd seen before back on Namek. I could feel that feeling well up again in the pit of my stomach, spreading like a warm flush up into my chest.

> "Iâ€|" he said softly, his voice trembling slightly, "Iâ€| could."

> My head was beginning to cloud over, my thoughts incoherent and hazy. All I could see was his face, looking down at me. His high brow, his intense gaze, his high cheekbones, his lipsâ€|

> He backed away, then turned his back to me. I felt an instant emptiness as he pulled away, the air rushing to fill the space he had been standing in. I watched his muscular back, the rise and fall of his shoulders. I could see his fists clenching and unclenching around the staff.

> "Vegeta?" I saw his shoulders stiffen. I made no move to approach him.

> "We'd better start if we're going to get anything done," he said gruffly, turning back to face me. His scowl had returned, his proud stance taking over again. Yet I could see a pained look in his eyes, but only for a moment, then it disappeared under the hard mask.

> I nodded silently, stepping over. He handed me the staff and we began training.

>
Next chapter: Training, thrashing, same difference...

8. Reality Is A State Of Mind: Ch 8

Author's note:

>In case you haven't noticed, I'm not exactly the best at dividing up my story into chapters... and I'm not exactly the most consistent uploader either (however, pestering does seem to help, even if it doesn't improve my mood). Anyway, I'll just keep writing on my merry little way.
--Quinn

>_____

> "You have to keep your eye on my hand, concentrate!"

> I stopped as I caught my breath. Vegeta was hovering above me, arms crossed. I turned to look at the ground, growling silently. We had been training for hours, and each time I thought I mastered it; Vegeta would throw in something new. The things that Goku taught me were helping me avoid being burnt to a crisp. 'He was right when he told me fighting a Saiyan was different,' I thought as I gulped back a breath, glaring at the crater a few feet from me. The grass inches

from my feet was singed brown.

> Closing my eyes, I tried to focus my mind, centre my thoughts. Shoving all distractions from my mind, I calmly opened my eyes. I looked up at him, waiting for me. He raised an eyebrow at me, and I nodded silently.

> Without waiting, he sent two chi blasts straight down. I flipped to dodge one and effortlessly hit the other blast straight back at him with a hard stroke. I saw his eyes widen and watched him quickly duck the chi blast that was aimed at his head. He turned to me in surprise and I smirked at him, like he had done so many times to me. He grinned back wickedly, then flew straight at me, sending chi blasts flying towards me.

> I calmly hit back each one at him, anticipating each blast as it left his hand. I made no move to step out of the way of his rapid approach, keeping my eyes locked on his. My arms began to ache with the impact of the chi blasts, but I gritted my teeth and continued, determined to win this one. At the last minute, I suddenly struck out with the staff. He abruptly stopped short, hovering just above the ground, his breathing rapid and uneven. My staff was inches from his throat, where it would have cut through skin and severed his jugular before impaling the brain with a small twistâ€| at least according to him. I lightly tapped the staff to his neck.
"Gotcha," I whispered, my breathing ragged.

>
Vegeta floated a little higher, so the staff no longer pointed at his tender throat. "Looks like you're learning," he smirked.

>
 "Looks like I am," I replied, raising an eyebrow.

>
 "That's good," said Vegeta, and I saw his chi flare up, "Cause now we can get to the real fun stuff."

>
 'Uh-oh,' was the last thing I thought. From then on, I didn't have time to think, it was hard enough keeping ahead of him.

>
 "This is going to take awhile," I muttered, hastily somersaulting to dodge a huge chi blast.

>

>
 Phoom! Phoom! Crack! Phoom! I watched the chi blast streak back at Vegeta who dodged it as he sent another one flying back at me. Grunting as I dodged it, I hastily leapt off the rock, flipping up into the air, landing on a taller rock. I glared at him, my breaths coming in ragged gasps. The day was nearly over and I was getting tired.

>
 Vegeta smirked at me and there was a crackle as the power built up in his fingertips again. I kept my eye on the growing chi blast twirling my staff expectantly. In one swift move, Vegeta threw back his arm and flung the blast towards me. I dodged to the side, feeling the heat of the blast zoom past my hips. Turning, my eyes widened as I watched the blast do a U-turn behind me.

>
 I dodged it again, only to have it come back at me. I glanced up at Vegeta, who seemed to be enjoying the show. 'Smile while you can,' I thought, a plan forming in my mind as I dodged the blast third time.

>
 I narrowed my eyes as I watched the chi blast turn and come at me again, the glowing ball of energy getting bigger as it approached. I stretched out my arms, the staff gripped tightly in my palms.

>
 I felt the impact of the blast hit the staff, and I let it push me up into the air. Summoning all my strength, I held on, feeling myself being forced higher by the chi blast crackling against the wood of my staff. I glanced over my shoulder, seeing Vegeta's shocked expression as I approached him on the force of the chi blast. The

whole manoeuvre lasted only a couple of seconds at most, but it seemed like things went in slow motion as my body moved in obedience to my mind.

>
 I flipped my body over the chi blast, my feet contacting his face in a sharp kick before I flipped again, steering the chi blast's course slightly. As I dropped back to the ground, I smirked as I saw the chi blast hit him, point blank. My feet landed softly on the rock, and I crossed my arms, waiting for the smoke to clear.

>
 He was floating in the air, dazed. His hair looked slightly singed, but he seemed none the worse for wear. He turned to look at me, and I smiled smugly at him.

>
 "Maybe that's enough for one day," he said, examining his slightly scorched breastplate.

>
 Nodding, I leapt down from the rock, but instead of dropping to the ground, I watched the ground soar away from under my feet. I didn't have to look up to know who was carrying me. His arms around me felt so familiar, so right. 'His arms are so warm,' I thought, but then I quickly cut myself off again. What was this weird feeling that kept creeping up in my belly every time I was with him? 'Or maybe I don't want to knowâ€|' I thought.

>
 "Vegeta, what are you doing?" I asked, forcing my voice not to tremble as I looked up at his face, so close to mine. He was staring ahead, the wind stirring his wild hair.

>
 "What does it look like?" he growled softly, "Or would you rather walk." He turned to me, and I stopped breathing. Our noses were barely an inch apart and his warm breath was tickling my lips.

>
 "No," I murmured softly, gazing into his eyes, "This is just fine."

>
 I was drowning, drowning in those intense eyes of his, and I couldn't lift a finger to help myselfâ€| not that I wanted to.

>
 The sky was glowing soft red and orange when we arrived back at Capsule Corporation. My legs felt like jelly as I stepped onto the cool tiles of my balcony. My body suddenly felt cold and I shivered involuntarily, wrapping my arms around myself as I turned back to Vegeta.

>
 "Thanks," I murmured as he handed me my staff, "for everything." I stood there looking at him, not really wanting to enter my room.

>
 He was silent, floating in front of my balcony. The memories of last night suddenly surfaced in my mind, the feelings from that night began to stir up again. He reached out his hand again, reaching over to my face. He paused just before he touched my cheek, and I could feel the warmth of his hand next to my cool cheek. I made no move to back away or retreatâ€| in fact; I made no movement at all.

>
 The fingers of his glove brushed against my cheek, and my hands trembled slightly in their position crossed against my chest.

>
 "Good night," he whispered, his hand still lingering on my cheek.

>
 I swallowed and nodded to him, as I seemed to have temporarily misplaced my voice. He slowly floated away, his figure silhouetted against the setting sun, before flying up and out of sight.

>
 The breeze blew across the balcony, and I hugged my arms tighter around myself. "Two days," I muttered, "Two more days."

>_____

>Next chapter: Should I stay... would it be a sin? <p><p>

9. Reality Is A State Of Mind: Ch 9

Author's note:

>Wow... I'm posting my stories faster than usual.
--Quinn

>_____

> Why did I feel like I wanted to stay here anyway? I had so much left behindâ€| or did I? Friends? I had friends hereâ€| and I could make more. Family? I had moved out of my parent's house long ago and I was always too immersed in my work to talk to them anyway. Work, ah yes. It was my be-all-end-all in the other world; the only path to success; the only way to significance. Here I did not need to compile useless reports, impress fickle bosses, or kill myself doing things I hated. This universe was simple, so uncomplicated, and yet there were so many possibilities. It all boiled down to one reason that I didn't want to leave this reality, but I wouldn't admit it to myselfâ€| I couldn't.

> "Hey Quinn, what's the matter?" Bulma walked into the hall, where I was sitting on the couch, staring at the wall.

> "Nothing," I mumbled, gazing at the fabric pattern on the sofa.

> "Yeah right," she said, sitting down next to me, "You've been wandering around the house in a daze all morning."

> "Just thinking," I said, giving her a half-hearted smile.

> "Worried about tomorrow?"

> "You could say that," I replied, leaning back onto the sofa with a sigh.

> "Want some advice?" Bulma pulled her legs up, turning her body to face me.

> "I'll take whatever help I can get," I groaned, lifting my hands to my face.

> "I know this is a clichÃ© and all," she said, leaning over, "But follow your heart."

> I turned my head to her, still resting it on the back of the couch. "Are you sure about that?"

> Bulma frowned for a second, as if deep in thought. "Yeah, I am."

> "But what if my heart wants to do something which my mind knows is totally irrational and illogical?"

> "Well if you didn't follow your heart, it would bug you about what would happen if you had chosen its path, and you'd never get any peace. The mind will follow once you decide."

> I looked at her. "If I make the wrong decision, I'm blaming you."

> She smirked. "I never told you that my advice was the best thing to listen to."

> "Are you telling me that you're deliberately giving me wrong guidance?" I raised an eyebrow at her.

> Bulma frowned at me. "Okay, now you're just being a pain."

> I grinned. "Sorry. But thanks, really."

> Bulma smiled. "No problem. I hope you know what your heart's saying."

> I sighed and stared at the ceiling. "Maybe," I murmured. Bulma patted me on the shoulder and left. I sighed again once I was alone.

> 'Should I really follow my heart? That weak silly thing that is so easily captivated and just as easily broken, that thing?'

> I groaned, covering my face with my hands. Tomorrow was the deciding day and I was still no closer to a decisionâ€| or at least, not a decision I was willing to acknowledge.

> "I'm going for a walk," I mumbled to no one in particular, picking up my staff and heading out the door.

> I wandered through the forest for most of the morning, picking fruit and berries and sitting in trees and on rocks staring at the sky. 'Maybe the answer will appear in front of me,' I thought, staring at the branches and leaves that framed the blue sky.

> "Hey."

> I jumped, looking around me. What was that? My eyes came to rest on a figure walking up to me.

> I smiled slightly, my mind still thoughtful. "Hello Vegeta."

> "What are you doing?" He stopped in front of me, his arms crossed as usual.

> "Thinking," I answered, looking back up at the sky.

> He snorted. "Silent contemplation is for the weak."

> I sighed. I was not in the mood to argue philosophy. "I haven't got much to do I'm afraid."

> "Then I'll continue what we were doing yesterday." He immediately floated up into the air.

> "Why not?" I sighed, getting up and picking up my staff. Maybe getting huge balls of energy flung at me would help clear my mind some.

>*****

> "That was very impressive," said Vegeta.

> I stood panting on the rock. "Thank you," I said between gulps of air, "Coming from you that really means a lot."

> The setting sun was testament to how long we'd been training. The moon was already beginning to appear in the dusky sky.

> "I think that is all you can learn from a teacher." Vegeta slowly landed on the rock next to me.

> I turned to him. "What do you mean?"

> "Experience is the best teacher. Becoming a great warrior is not taught by another, it is gained by one's own fights in battle."

> "Oh." I looked down at the rock. The rush I had while training began to seep away. My mind was beginning to cloud up again with all the thoughts that plagued me that morning. When I trained with him, my mind became clear, unhindered, but now the rush of thoughts were spilling back into my head. Then I thought of something. Looking up at him, I asked "But can we still spar?"

> He smirked. "Maybe tomorrow."

> "Tomorrow," I murmured, looking up at the moon, now clear in the sky. "I may be gone tomorrow."

> "So you are leaving?" he asked gruffly, joining me to look at the moon.

> "Maybe," I murmured. There was an ache that was beginning to throb in my chest, as if my heart were crying.

> There was a long pause. "Do you want to?" he asked, his voice low and quiet.

> My heart's tears found their way to my eyes and I could feel them welling up in my lower lid. I bowed my head sadly, shutting my eyes. "I-I don't know."

> I looked up at him. "Why are you asking me this?"

> He turned to me sharply. Looks of conflict and confusion passed over his face before a mask of anger finally moulded his features into an angry scowl as he answered harshly, "It doesn't matter why I asked you what. I can do as I please! Who are you to question me?"

> I looked at him, too shocked to stop the tears from spilling onto my cheeks. Vegeta's scowl wavered as he saw the tears but he caught

himself, turning to leave with a growl. He took a few angry steps across the rock, but stopped at the edge. I watched his back, the moonlight casting a pale glow on the armour. I could clearly see his chest heaving beneath the cold armour. Slowly, he turned his head to look at me, the scowl still visible on his face. The breeze blew against my face, drying up my wet cheeks as more tears spilled out to retrace the paths down my face.

> "You, what have you done to me?" he growled, walking over briskly to take my face in his hands. "What are these alien feelings that you create inside me?" he whispered, brushing away the tears with his thumb, his eyes searching my face.

> He dropped his arms and turned away, bowing his head and squeezing his eyes shut. "How do you have so much power over me?" he whispered angrily, half-lifting his hands, fists tightly clenched.

> "Me?" I whispered, my brows lowering angrily, "Me??" My own fists clenched at my sides as I turned to face him. "What have I done to you??" My voice trembled as I fought to keep control. Vegeta looked at me, the maddening scowl still on his face. I felt the rage taking hold of me, and my mind was soon clouded as the blood pounded in my brain, goading me on.

> "Ever since I saw you on Namek I haven't been able to think about anything else, you've infected my brain!" My voice was getting louder and I was yelling by the end of the sentence, tears, now tears of anger, running down my face, but I didn't care, how dare he be angry with me for affecting him??

> The air crackled with energy, and I felt the power building up in my veins. "You were the reason I felt enough rage towards Freeza to send him into the next dimension! I killed him because he killed you!!" Vegeta's scowl faltered in shock. The energy began to pulse and a flickering glow began to exude from my slight frame. My mind raged and my body was following.

> "When I saw you out on the balcony the first night I couldn't think straight! Kami, it took everything I had to pull myself away! And now I'm willing to give up an entire existence, an entire life, in another reality, the only one I have known all these years, just because of you!!!" I stopped short, my breathing ragged. What did I just say?? The realisation of it hit me, my heart's decision materialised before me eyes and the clarity of it was painful. I let the staff slip from my hand and heard the clatter of the wood on the rock echo in the night air as I buried my face in my hands, letting the tears soak into the soft cloth of the robe sleeve.

> The glow dissipated into the evening air and suddenly I felt weary, my body drained of energy as I shed tears onto the fabric of my robe. For a minute, all was silent, except for the wind, the leaves, and my quiet weeping. Then I felt his hand stroke my own hand covering my face. I felt him gently pull my hands off my face, and I made no move to resist, my mind numb and weary from emotion. He tilted my chin up, making me look at him. The look in his dark eyes was unreadable, yet so intense that my knees felt weak. He cupped my face in his hands, his thumb brushing against my lips. Pulling me gently, he pressed the right side of his face to the left side of mine, his hands drifting down to rest on my shoulders. I could hear his shallow breathing in my ear as my own shaky breathing stirred the still night air. I wondered if he could hear my heartbeat, as it was pounding loudly enough in my ear. The familiar feeling washed over me as I stood there, with him. But this time I wasn't afraid, and I didn't fight it. Vulnerable and frail as it may have seemed, my heart had overpowered my mind, and I felt safe, complete.

> I reached up and gently brushed my fingers against the skin just below his ear. I heard him take in a sharp breath as my fingers ran

down his neck. 'Thisâ€|this is my reality,' I heard my heart sigh as my hand came to rest on his shoulder. "Vegeta," I breathed, shutting my eyes as I revelled in the feeling of his body warming mine.

> He groaned softly, pulling his head back. I opened my eyes to watch as his own eyes searched my face. In the moonlight he looked regal, his skin glowing with the pale light. He took a pained breath, leaning over to touch his forehead to mine. "Why do I feel this way?" he whispered, his voice unsteady.

> He slid his head to the side, and I stopped breathing as the sensation of his skin grazing mine shot through my body, making me gasp softly. He stopped when the sides of our faces were pressed together once more. "Why do I need you?" he breathed into my ear, his voice pained, "Why do I want you?" His moist breath sent shivers down my neck, and his words sent a tremor of emotion through my heart.

> I gently pushed myself away, looking up at him. I lifted up a hand and touched his cheek, my fingers tingling as they made contact. His eyes fluttered close as I ran my fingers down to his sharp chin, asking myself how one person could have so much power over me.

> He lifted his hand and closed it over mine. His eyes still shut, he gently pulled my hand down and held it against his left breast, the armour cool against my warm skin. He opened his eyes, looking at me intently. "Something aches," he whispered, "Just here." He gently pressed my hand closer against the armour.

> I glanced down at his gloved hand, closed over my own. "That's your heart, Vegeta," I murmured, tilting my head back up to gaze at him.

> "My heart?" His brows furrowed questioningly, his hand still clasping mine to his chest.

> I nodded silently my gaze still on our joined hands, my hand warm under his. My own heart was aching; each beat a painful throb.

> He lowered his gaze, a faraway look in his eyes. I stood with him unmoving, wishing the rest of my body were like my hand, wrapped within his arms, held against his chest.

> He looked back up, gazing at me for a moment before hesitantly reaching out his other hand. He paused for a few moments before pressing the gloved hand against my left chest, just above my breast, his warm palm over my own painfully beating heart.

> I smiled sadly at him, lifting my free hand to cover his over my own chest. I could feel my own heartbeat in my fingers; the aching beats sounding themselves in my ear.

> He looked up at me, and my heart twinged. "Does your heartâ€| ache too?" he whispered, and my heart cried out to answer.

> I let out a trembling breath. "Yes," I whispered, "It does." My heart twinged again, a pang of longing shooting through my chest.

> He stepped to me, our two pairs of clasped hands pressed alongside each other between our bodies. His eyes locked with mine and nothing else existed, just him and me. The forest disappeared into a blurry haze and the sounds of the night were drowned out by my heartbeat echoing in my ears.

> He pulled his hands gently out from between us and ran them up to my neck, his eyes never leaving mine. His fingers brushed against my skin as he slid them up the sides of my neck, his thumbs coming to rest at my chin and his forefingers on my jaw line. He paused, looking into my eyes. My knees felt weak.

> His gaze searched my face before his eyes returned to mine, still

searching. He leaned closer, tilting his face slightly, his eyes still on mine. I could feel his warm moist breath on my lips, making them tingle in readiness, sending a throb of yearning through my abdomen. A quiet whimper escaped my lips.

> He stopped, gazing at me uncertainly, as if waiting to see if I'd protest or pull back, but I stayed motionless, my breathing shallow. I was waitingâ€¦ hoping. He lowered his head slowly, his eyes still gazing into mine. As our lips neared each other, he lowered his eyelids, and I closed my own eyes, my mind and heart racing.

> I drew in a sharp breath as our lips brushed, the sensation shooting down my body. I felt him stop short, but in a movement compelled by my heart, I leaned towards him, touching our lips fully for the kiss that my lips had longed for since the first moment I saw him. I felt him stiffen at first, but as my lips moved over his, he slowly leaned in to return the kiss, sliding his hands down to my waist as his lips caressed mine with a tenderness that surprised me.

> When our lips finally parted, I opened my eyes slowly, my gaze meeting his once again. He hadn't moved his head; his lips still centimetres from mine and his breath grazing my lips as we stared at each other, the emotions from the kiss returning as the kiss embedded itself indelibly in my memory.

> He leaned back slightly, studying my features in the moonlight. I watched him as his eyes moved across my face, our shallow breathing stirring the quiet night air. His eyes returned to mine, the look in them questioning. "Does your heart still ache?" he whispered, his breath gently stirring my hair.

> "No," I murmured, gazing back into his dark eyes. My heart was quiet; its beating constant and unpaired.

> He leaned back in, his breath making my skin tingle. Lifting a hand, he gently laid it against my cheek, the glove cool against my flushed skin. He brought his face closer, our noses brushing.

"Neither does mine," he breathed, his eyes boring into my soul.

> A tremor of elation ran through my body as he tilted his head and leaned in, capturing my lips in his once again. This kiss held more passion, it was more intense with a fiery sense of ardour, sending thrills down my spine as pulled me against him, his other hand moving to bury itself in my hair. I lifted my hands up to his shoulders, wrapping my arms around him as he lowered his head, kissing me deeper, sending my mind spinning.

> My heart no longer ached; it no longer throbbed with wanting. He had filled my mind, made my soul tremble with delight as his arms held me against him. Now my heart did not beat in pain, nor was it beating alone. As he kissed me there, in the forest, watched only by the trees and the silent moon, I swear I felt our hearts tune to each other, sounding each beat together as one.

> He finally pulled his lips away and rested the side of his head against mine, his breathing hard against my ear. My mind and lips were still reeling from the intensity of the kiss, but my heart was calm, beating steadily in my chest. I felt so safe wrapped within his strong arms, safer than anywhere I'd ever known.

> As our breathing slowed, he pulled his head back to look at me. I smiled at him, and a smirk pulled up the corners of his own mouth. He brought both hands to my face, cupping it. Slowly, he stroked my cheek, his head tilted as if trying to read something in my face. I gazed back at him, silent and unquestioning. Suddenly, his hand stopped, his fingers stiffened against my cheek. His expression became serious, his eyes intent on something else, as if he were contemplating something significant. The moonlight was silver in his

dark eyes. 'Kami, he's beautiful,' my mind said, and I smiled in agreement. This time there was no running, no hiding from these feelings. 'He is beautiful,' I agreed silently.

> When I smiled, Vegeta seemed pulled out of his thoughts, his eyes focusing on my face once more. His look was intense once again, and I could feel his gaze running across my face. His eyes returned to mine and he began to lean towards me. The look in his eyes was intense, passionate. My breath caught in my throat as he neared me, the warmth of his breath once more touching my face. His look faltered for a second and he paused, his eyes questioning. I wasn't sure what the question was, but my heart was screaming 'Yes!' and from what I had learned, the heart wasn't to be ignored. I smiled at him reassuringly, and I saw him look surprised for a second but then he smiled back, his fingers caressing my cheek. His look became intense once more and he leaned closerâ€| and lightly bit the tip of my nose.

>
Ooo.... what'll Quinn do now?

>
Next chapter: Forever? You sure about that?

10. Reality Is A State Of Mind: Ch 10

Author's note:

>I know it's been a long time... my apologies. I hope this is worth the wait.
--Quinn

>_____

>I froze. The Saiyan bonding kiss?? So it was real, at least in this dimension. The initial surprise then gave way to the bigger revelation, and it blew my mind. 'Oh Kami,' I thought, 'He wants to bond with meâ€| as a mate!' My mind began to race uncontrollably, the thoughts rushing through my mind, but my heart was stillâ€| still and unafraid. I smiled at my heart, then obediently followed its bidding. I lightly closed my teeth around his chin, my mind screaming at me. But I didn't care, I would be hisâ€| and he would be mine.

>I felt him stiffen. He pulled back his head, his forehead furrowing slightly above his raised eyebrows.
My heart knew full well what I had done, and the strange thing was that it was not afraid, not even hesitant. The peace that I felt was beyond understanding, beyond questioning. I smiled softly at Vegeta. His face was thoughtful, his gaze intense but unreadable as he absently stroked my cheek. After a moment, he leaned in once again, his lips taking mine.

>
This kiss was different, his mouth beginning to join his lips in invading my mouth. He held me against him almost possessively, his arms wrapped securely around me. The emotions and feelings this kiss invoked in me sent waves of delight coursing through my body. My body longed to be nearer to him, pressing against him of its own accord. He pulled me closer, his arms lifting me up to meet his lips more fully. Wrapping my legs around his waist I clung to him, beginning to claim his mouth as much as he was claiming mine.

>
My mind felt intoxicated with the sensations running through my body, and it was the suddenly stronger wind that alerted me to our shift in location. It blew against my back, causing my hair to whip around our heads. I could tell Vegeta had levitated us up into the air above the trees, but the feeling of his arms around me made it impossible for me to panic.

>
I broke off our kiss, leaning my head against his as I tried to catch my breath. "What are you doing?" I whispered hoarsely, my breathing ragged.

>
"Taking you back." He held me tightly against him. "Hold on."

>
I opened my mouth to protest, but in a few seconds we were back at Capsule Corporation, hovering outside my balcony. I glanced at the opening that led back to my room, the curtains billowing through the unclosed door. My heart suddenly felt heavy, sinking with a weighty sadness. I didn't want to leave him, not yetâ€| not ever. 'Things were going too fast anyway,' sighed my mind, but I was listening to my heart, which was whimpering sorrowfully in my chest.

>
I walked through the door without turning back, as looking at him now would probably render me incapable of walking away. Just the image of him still hovering outside my balcony was enough to slow my walk, my heart burning within me. I slipped off my sandals and walked across to my bed, the carpet soft under my bare soles. I stood silently in front of my bed, trying to hold back the tears that were welling up in my eyes.

>
I let out a shaky sigh, trying to turn my thoughts elsewhere. Out of the dimness of the room a hand touched my shoulder, and all thoughts disappeared from my head as I turned to faceâ€| him!

>
What was he doing in my room?? I tried to ask him my question, but my mouth wouldn't move.

>
"Why do you look so surprised?" He scowled slightly, his brows lowering, but his hand on my shoulder moved to touch my face gently.

>
"I-I thought you were leaving," I managed quietly, my eyes lowering to the floor between us.

>
There was a silent pause. I stared at the floor, my face tingling against his fingers. Then I watched as the space between us lessened as he stepped closer to me. I concentrated hard on the floor, not trusting myself to stay still if I looked at him just then.

>
He waited a moment, his breath gently stirring my hair, before he lifted my chin, forcing me to look into his eyes. My legs felt weak as that familiar feeling washed over me again, flowing through my body in wonderful tremors.

>
He looked at me strangely. "Leave you?"

>
Before I could answer he moved in and brushed his lips against mine, and all thought was lost to my mind. My lips tingled mercilessly. His lips moved across my face, kissing my cheek softly, moving slowly round to my ear and down my neck. I leaned willingly against him, my breathing shallow and my eyelids sliding shut as the sensations flowed through my body like an electric charge dispelled from his warm moist lips.

>
He grazed his teeth against my neck, forcing a soft moan from my throat. I reached up and buried my fingers in his untamed hair, breathing in his intoxicating scent and hoping to Kami that I would not pass out from the euphoric state I was rapidly ascending to.

>
His fingers ran down my shoulder, pushing against the soft fabric of the robe to expose my bare shoulder. His lips moved down, following the path traced out by his fingers. I turned my head, burying my face in his hair, pressing my lips against his head as I tried to suppress a groan. His arms came around me as his lips continued their soft torture back up my shoulder. For a moment my mind was overcharged with the sensation of being completely enfolded in his arms. I lowered my head, resting it in the crook of his neck, his scent filling my nose. He paused, just holding me against him.

>

>The curtains shifted in the breeze as the moon shone into the room, filling it with an ethereal light. We stood there silently, unmoving. The feeling that had throbbed through my brain before had now slowed down to a quiet flow. I recognized it now. There is only one feeling that is so intense yet so soft. All those times when I felt it wash over me, its power overcoming my mind, it was the birth of this feeling, this emotion that now had found an eternal home in my lonesome heart. The word 'love' feels too inadequate to hold the full meaning of this feeling. No, it is unfathomable and immeasurable, just as the depths of the heart are boundless. The limitations of language frustrate me. So many concepts, so little wordsâ€¦ is there a word that describes it without losing the intensity of this feeling that burns in my soul?

>I squeeze my eyes shut, sensing this indescribable feeling building up again, pulsing through my mind, each throb more intense than the next. I almost cried out for the strength of this emotion, wishing to Kami that I could find some way to share it with him. 'Vegeta, how do I describe this feeling?' my mind groaned, talking silently to the Saiyan in my arms. 'If only I could find the words, my beloved, my lifeâ€¦ my world.'

>The last two words echoed through my mind, another wave of this feeling crashed into my mind, making me take in a sharp breath. I opened my eyes when I felt Vegeta tremble slightly. He raised his head, looking at me with a curious expression on his face. Saying nothing, he leaned back and rested his forehead against mine, his eyes tightly closed in concentration.

>All at once I began to feel something else washing over me. I shut my eyes, holding back a gasp as the feeling intensified. This feeling was similar to the one that still burned in my mind, but it was more dominant, a driving desire to possess and protectâ€¦ to have and to hold. It stirred up my own emotion, pulling it out from my mind to send it pulsing hotly through my body. I felt my breathing quicken as the two feelings seemed to form another emotion, much more intense than either one. Vegeta's arms tightened around me, and my fingers dug into his shoulder. As the feeling pounded in my brain, a red glow caused me to open my eyelids slightly, and my eyes widened as I spied red flames of energy dancing around us, coupling with clear blue flames. 'So this energy IS caused by emotion,' I thought.

>Before I could think further, the feeling sent another throb of emotion through my body, causing me to tighten my grip around Vegeta's shoulders as my eyes slid shut. I felt him grip me even tighter as another more intense throb followed, sending my mind reeling. The grip would probably have crushed a normal humanâ€¦ but I wasn't exactly normal, far from it.

>The feeling swirled in my mind, bringing up images behind my closed eyelids. I felt something connect, and a stream of foreign thoughts poured into my mind. I saw pictures of fights I hadn't seen and people I didn't knowâ€¦ and images of me. As the feeling slowly subsided, I leaned against Vegeta, my lungs panting for air.

>"What was that?" I whispered hoarsely against his shoulder.

>Vegeta leaned back, grinning at me almost evilly, his breathing as hard as mine. "I think we've bonded," he murmured.

>"You think??" I raised my eyebrow at him, my own lips curling into a wicked grin.

>He shrugged. "From what I've heard, when Saiyans bond they can sense each strong feelings from each other. If the emotions are extremely powerful they can even hear and see each other's thoughts. But I've

never really understood bondingâ€¦ until now."

>Vegeta lifted a hand and gently stroked my face. He concentrated for a second, and I felt a flicker of emotion, causing me to tremble slightly. So it was his emotions I was feeling... the realisation of this made my heart skip a beat.

>He smirked, and then spoke again softly. "What do they call bonding in your world?"

>I bit my lip slightly. "We have many names for a bond between two people. Many times we call it 'love', but there is no word that can truly describe that feeling." I shook my head sadly.

>"Love," he murmured, the word sounding foreign on his tongue. He looked at me. "Use it," he said.

>"Butâ€¦" I began. The last thing I wanted was to under-rate this wonderful feeling.

>He frowned and interrupted my protest, his voice gruff but gentle. "Use it with the bond."

>I gazed at him for a moment, unsure. I sighed, if that was what he wanted, I'd do it. I shut my eyes, concentrating on that feeling that had receded to the back of my mind. I felt the familiar waves of emotion building up. I let it control my thoughts, flooding the recesses of my mind and my heart. My heartbeat began to quicken once again, my breathing following in suit. The feeling soon was pulsating through my veins, filling my mind with its intoxicating surge. I felt Vegeta arms tighten around me, his own breathing shallow. "Vegeta," I breathed.

>I opened my eyes. He was looking at me, his gaze was heated. I gazed back at him, my own eyes burning just as fiercely. "Vegeta," I murmured, looking into his eyes, the feeling raging through my mind. "Iâ€¦ loveâ€¦ you."

>All at once I felt the feeling intensify with my words. As if suddenly compelled by a powerful force, Vegeta swiftly leaned over and captured my lips with his, sending a surge of emotion through my body. I gasped against his mouth, clutching desperately at his shoulders. My brain whirled as the sheer force of thisâ€¦ thisâ€¦ love, swept over me. 'So this is what love really feels like,' I heard myself wonder silently, but then Vegeta pull me closer, pressing his body to mine, and all my thoughts disappeared in a flood of sensations and emotions.

>
The lemon taste is getting so strong... shall a full-fledged lemon be written? Can I... will I? (ponders to herself)
>
Next chapter: Will be NC-17 rated... kami help me...

End
file.